

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 HA-05 /055 W

-----072675 010952Z /23

O R 010920Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2653

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 1718

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, MY

SUBJECT: DATUK HARUN TURNS HIMSELF IN

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 1690

1. ACCORDING TO PRESS SOURCES AND POLICE CONTACTS, FORMER SELANGOR CHIEF MINISTER DATUK HARUN IDRIS TURNED HIMSELF IN TO POLICE OFFICERS AT A CHECK POINT NEAR HIS RESIDENCE AT 5/30 A.M. MARCH 1. HE WAS REPORTEDLY TAKEN BY POLICE TO THE KUALA LUMPUR GENERAL HOSPITAL TO HAVE A CYST REMOVED AND WAS SUBSEQUENTLY TAKEN TO PUDU PRISON IN KUALA LUMPUR.

2. HARUN'S SURRENDER TO POLICE HAS EASED TENSIONS CONSIDERABLY IN KUALA LUMPUR. HIS SUPPORTERS APPARENTLY HAVE DISPERSED FROM THE SITE OF THEIR VIGIL AT HIS RESIDENCE. WE UNDERSTAND FROM A SENIOR GOM OFFICIAL
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THAT THE POLICE HAD PLANNED TO MOVE IN AFTER SEVERAL DAYS' WAIT TO TAKE HARUN BY FORCE IF NECESSARY. OFFICIALS HAVE EXPRESSED GREAT RELIEF THAT IT WAS NOT NECESSARY TO USE VIOLENCE TO TAKE HARUN INTO CUSTODY.

3. COMMENT. WHILE VIOLENCE IN THE IMMEDIATE

SITUATION HAS BEEN AVOIDED, THE GOM IS NOT ENTIRELY ASSURED THAT THE ADVERSE REPERCUSSIONS WILL BE AVOIDED. HARUN'S YOUNG SUPPORTERS ARE STILL IRATE AT THE TREATMENT HE HAS BEEN GIVEN AND COULD STILL CAUSE TROUBLE; HOWEVER THEIR TROUBLEMAKING POTENTIAL IS CONSIDERABLY LESSENER BECAUSE THE FOCAL POINT-- THEIR HERO--IS NO LONGER IN PUBLIC VIEW. ALSO, THE POLITICAL RETURNS ARE NOT ALL IN YET. END COMMENT.

4. THE MARCH 11 STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS IN KELANTAN, CONSIDERED AN IMPORTANT TEST OF UMNO'S POPULAR SUPPORT, COULD BE AFFECTED BY THE HARUN INCIDENT SHOULD THERE BE WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S INSISTENCE THAT HARUN SERVE HIS JAIL SENTENCE. EVEN IN KELANTAN THE CONVICTED MALAY LEADER HAS MANY ADMIRERS AND THE OPPOSITION MAY TRY TO EXPLOIT THESE SENTIMENTS AGAINST UMNO. HOWEVER, THE FACT THAT A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION HAS BEEN AVOIDED MAY LIMIT THE AMOUNT OF POLITICAL CAPITAL UMNO'S OPPOSITION WILL BE ABLE TO EXTRACT FROM THIS AFFAIR.

5. NONETHELESS, CONSIDERABLE BITTERNESS REMAINS, PARTICULARLY BETWEEN PRO- AND ANTI-HARUN FORCES IN UMNO, AND WE CANNOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME OF HARUN'S HOT-HEADED SUPPORTERS WILL ATTEMPT MILITANT TACTICS TO SECURE THEIR HERO'S FREEDOM.
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SHOULD THAT OCCUR, WE HAVE NO REASON TO DOUBT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE TO FOLLOW THE VERY FIRM "RULE OF LAW" POLICY BACKED BY IMPRESSIVE SECURITY PRECAUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE OUTSET OF THE CRISIS LAST WEEK.
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